

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in this application:

Listing of claims

Claims 1-14 (Canceled)

15. (Currently amended) A two-part carton comprising an open top container and a top closure connected to said open top container, said open top container and said top closure formed from separate blanks respectively, said open top container including a series of wall panels, said open top container is reinforced by a series of integral reinforcing panels hinged respectively to said wall panels along an upper periphery of said open top container, each reinforcing panel is disposed in overlapping relationships with a respective one of said wall panels, ~~and each reinforcing panel is hingedly connected to at least an adjacent one of said reinforcing panels~~ wherein said open top container comprises at least one reinforced handle aperture struck from at least one of said reinforcing panels, wherein said at least one handle aperture is located at an elevation above said top closure, wherein said top closure comprises at least one end flap hingedly connected thereto, and said at least one end flap is folded downward to avoid covering said at least one handle aperture.

16. (Currently amended) The carton according to claim ~~46~~15 wherein said top closure is disposed at an elevation below said upper periphery of said open top container.

17. (Currently amended) The carton according to claim ~~46~~15 wherein said top closure is disposed at an elevation substantially equal to the elevation of a lower extremity of said reinforcing panels.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently amended) The carton according to claim ~~46~~15 wherein said top closure comprises apertures for receiving articles, and wherein each of said apertures has a frangible connection with at least another one of said apertures to facilitate removal of said articles.

20. (Currently amended) The carton according to claim ~~20~~19 wherein upon removal of said articles, the carton retains sufficient structural integrity such that the carton can be re-used for returning empty articles.

21. (Currently amended) The carton according to claim ~~46~~15 wherein said reinforcing panels are hingedly connected to the open top container entirely along said upper periphery of said open top container.

22. (Currently amended) The carton according to claim ~~46~~15 wherein at least one of said reinforcing panels is hingedly connected at opposed side edges of said at least one reinforcing panel to adjacent ones of said reinforcing panels respectively.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently amended) The carton according to claim ~~46~~15 wherein said top closure comprises a main panel and a plurality of flaps hingedly connected to said main panel along a periphery of said main panel, ~~and~~ wherein a first pair of oppositely disposed ones of said flaps are folded upwardly from said main panel and a second pair of oppositely disposed ones of said flaps adjacent to said first pair are folded downwardly of said main panel, and wherein said at least one end flap comprises said oppositely disposed flaps of said second pair.

26-28. (Canceled)

29. (New) The carton according to claim 15 wherein said at least one end flap is disposed adjacent to said at least one reinforcing panel from which said at least one reinforced handle aperture is struck, and said at least one end flap is disposed below said at least one reinforced handle aperture.

30. (New) The carton according to claim 29 wherein said at least one end flap is disposed in a plane of said at least one reinforcing panel.

31. (New) The carton according to claim 29 wherein said at least one end flap is disposed entirely below said at least one reinforced handle aperture.

32. (New) The carton according to claim 15 wherein said open top container comprises at least one second reinforced handle aperture struck from at least one of said wall panels adjacent to said at least one reinforcing panel, said first and second reinforced handle apertures are aligned with each other to provide a single handle opening.

33. (New) The carton according to claim 15 wherein said at least one end flap is disposed below the elevation of a lower extremity of said reinforcing panels.

34. (New) The carton according to claim 15 wherein said top closure further comprises at least one securing end flap hingedly connected thereto, and said at least one securing end flap is secured in a flat face contacting relationship to at least another one of said reinforcing panels to lock said top closure within said open top container.

35. (New) The carton according to claim 34 wherein said at least one securing end flap is folded upward.

36. (New) The carton according to claim 35 wherein said at least one securing end flap is in flat face contacting relationship between said at least other reinforcing panel and an upper portion of an adjacent one of said wall panels.

37. (New) The carton according to claim 25 wherein said oppositely disposed flaps of said first pair are secured in flat face contacting relationship to other ones of said reinforcing panels to lock said top closure within said open top container.

38. (New) The carton according to claim 37 wherein each of said oppositely disposed flaps of said first pair is secured in flat face contacting relationship between a respective one of said other reinforcing panels and an upper portion of an adjacent one of said wall panels.